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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 001878

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/26/2014  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [VE](#) [OAS](#)  
SUBJECT: VENEZUELA: SIGNATURE APPEALS UPDATE, JUNE 1

REF: A. CARACAS 1861

[1](#)B. CARACAS 1860

Classified By: Abelardo A. Arias, Political Counselor, for Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

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Summary  
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[1](#)1. (C) The Coordinadora Democratica (CD) claimed on June 1 they had collected 131,000 more signature appeal than needed to activate the referendum against President Hugo Chavez. National Electoral Council (CNE) Vice President Ezequiel Zamora (pro-opposition) denounced on May 31 that the CNE had inexplicably stopped tallying results, and only resumed work when the delay was discovered. Former President Jimmy Carter and OAS SYG Cesar Gaviria made a surprise visit to the CNE on May 31, because they had noticed a lag in information about results, drawing threats from CNE President Francisco Carrasquero and CNE Director Oscar Battaglini (pro-GOV) they would toss out both international observer missions. Carter and Gaviria subsequently met with Chavez, who reassured them he would abide by the decision of the CNE. End Summary.

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CD Briefs Diplomatic Corps  
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[1](#)2. (SBU) The Coordinadora Democratica (CD) briefed the diplomatic corps June 1 on the results of the May 28-30 signature appeals (reparos) for the presidential recall referendum. DCM and poloff attended. Sumate representative Roberto Abdul reported that 750,931 persons confirmed their signatures, with 94,745 persons withdrawing their signatures, for a net gain of 656,186. When added to the 1.91 million signatures already certified by the National Electoral Council (CNE), the number of valid signatures rises to 2,567,150, or 131,067 in excess of number needed to activate the recall vote against President Hugo Chavez. Abdul said they had taken 345 complaints from citizens about aggression at the appeals centers, mistreatment by the military, and confusing CNE procedures.

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Zamora Accuses CNE of Delays  
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[1](#)3. (U) On the evening of May 31, CNE Vice President Ezequiel Zamora (pro-opposition) told reporters the CNE had lost a day of work adding up the daily tally sheets (actas) due to manipulation in the informatics department. Zamora also complained that he had been denied access to information about the appeals. Zamora denied rumors that the CNE had developed new instructions to the committee processing the actas, and threatened to "rebel" if the CNE generated new rules now, after the fact.

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Carter and Gaviria Make Surprise Visit  
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[1](#)4. (U) Former President Jimmy Carter and OAS SYG Cesar Gaviria arrived at the CNE minutes after Zamora's statement and were received by Zamora and fellow opposition Director Sobella Mejias. Carter and Gaviria found idle the offices where the actas were supposed to be being tallied. They told reporters they had come to the CNE because they were concerned about the lag in information they were receiving from the CNE. Carter subsequently met with President Chavez. Carter told reporters June 1 that Chavez reiterated his promise to abide by the CNE's decision. CNE Director Jorge Rodriguez (pro-GOV) appeared before reporters after Carter and Gaviria left the CNE and criticized the observers for not having given prior notice of their visit. Rodriguez claimed the totalization process was proceeding normally, noting that some actas were slow to arrive at CNE site. Gaviria the Ambassador on June 1 that CNE President Francisco Carrasquero and Director Oscar Battaglini threatened to expel President

Carter and Gaviria. Carter and Gaviria did not blink.

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CD Positive, But Laments Delays, Persecution  
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15. (U) CD negotiator Alberto Quiros told the diplomatic corps June 1 Zamora's accusations the day before were justified. The process is being carried out in a normal manner, he said, with some inconveniences. Specifically, Quiros cited the late delivery of actas from the states. He said that CNE had informed him that morning that all but three states had been received and the remainder would arrive at the CNE on June 1. Quiros said he is confident the CNE is now working and can announce final results by June 4. Fellow CD negotiator Felipe Mujica, Secretary General of the Movement to Socialism (MAS), asserted that there is no reason for the delays other than that the CNE is waiting for the political decision from Chavez as to how to proceed.

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Chavistas Back CNE Authority, Cry Fraud  
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16. (U) Comando Ayacucho Coordinator Ismael Garcia told reporters June 1 that the OAS and Carter Center (TCC) must maintain their objectivity and not emit opinions that are the competency of the CNE. Fifth Republic Movement (MVR) Deputy William Tarek Saab accused the OAS/TCC of speaking on behalf of opposition parties AD and COPEI and questioned the OAS' inclusion of a State Department official in its observer mission. MVR Director Elias Jaua told reporters June 1 the appeals were a civic demonstration by Venezuelans despite being "stained" by criminals linked to the "counter-revolution" who falsified identity cards to forge signatures. Jaua said the MVR would request the CNE permit them a physical inspection of the appeals registers as part of their complaint of alleged electoral crimes.

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Comment  
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17. (C) The GOV is well aware there are enough signatures to force the referendum. Chavista lieutenants continue to level accusations against the opposition of massive fraud, setting the stage for Chavez to reject the results of the appeals should he so choose. He may also decide to squeeze the CNE and eke out a favorable decision, as he did during the signature drive.

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